

# STREETS AHEAD

THE MAGAZINE FOR FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING TENANTS



## RENT INCREASE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW & OUR SUPPORT TO YOU

WINTER EDITION

CREATING HOMES, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF

**Freebridge**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING

# WELCOME TO STREETS AHEAD

Anita Jones  
Chief Executive



**Hello all and a very warm welcome to our first Streets Ahead of 2024. I hope you all had a lovely festive break.**

While 2024 may only be a few months old, it feels like much has already happened this year.

It would be remiss of me not to begin by discussing the importance of Awaab's Law and what that will mean for all Housing Associations, including Freebridge, moving forward.

The passing of a child is heartbreaking and the preventable death of Awaab Ishak, who died as a result of prolonged exposure to mould in his Rochdale home back in 2020 really struck a chord with me, and undoubtedly all of us.

As with all other Housing Associations up and down the country, we have a collective responsibility to ensure that this doesn't happen again. You will have seen that on MyFreebridge we have been asking you to assist with the Awaab's Law consultation and I would be very grateful if you can take a few moments to complete the short survey. You can also find out more later in this edition of Streets Ahead.

You have my assurance that Freebridge will do our utmost to investigate and fix health hazards, including damp and mould, within the proposed new

guidelines and I encourage you to contact our dedicated team should you have any health concerns within your home.

I know that another area of specific interest for you is the rent you pay on your Freebridge home.

By now, you will have had your letters explaining what we will be charging from April. It remains a challenging time and, as with last year, inflation is still much higher than we'd like. The decision around the rent increase was taken following a great deal of thought and consideration.

Freebridge has a continued ambitious strategy for improvement. We understand how important your homes are to you, and we must continue to fund our repairs and maintenance services adequately to maintain them well.

After the rise, which is being replicated across the social housing sector both locally and nationally, Freebridge will continue to charge some of the lowest rents in the area, across both the private rented and social housing sectors. I understand that doesn't make it any easier. However, I want you to know that we remain committed to keeping our rents

as low as possible whilst still delivering on our priorities.

If the increases are causing you any concern, please know that we continue to offer every possible help to our customers who need support. This month's issue also includes information around our Support Fund in addition to a dedicated space on our website.

Before I end this month's column, I wanted to tell you how pleased I was to see the first 15 of our 78 homes at Salters Road ready for their first tenants. As more of these properties become available over the coming months, they will be available for bidding on Home Choice.

We were also pleased to have been given the green light on our development in Stoke Ferry. Both the Salters Road and Stoke Ferry properties will be great additions to their respective areas as we continue our journey to make good on our promise to create homes, communities, and local spaces to be proud of.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Streets Ahead and look forward to speaking to you again in the Spring.

*Anita*



## SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CREW

**You may have noticed that we've made a change when it comes to our grounds maintenance and garden assistance services.**

This is the service we provide some of you when it comes to the upkeep of your garden and external spaces.

We're very pleased to let you know that we now have a contract with Groundscapes to carry out these services on our behalf.

Our contract with previous providers CGM ended late last year after feedback from you, our customers, about the service they had been providing.

Well, we listened to your concerns and we're pleased to have already received positive feedback from many of you about the service Groundscapes are delivering!

Groundscapes are a landscaping and tree surgery company based

in East Anglia. They have been working throughout Norfolk, Suffolk and the East of England over the past decade and have steadily built a strong reputation, client base and business.

They pride themselves on providing an experienced workforce for all things landscape and tree related and we're very pleased to be working closely with them.

Their aim is to provide a cost-effective, efficient and reliable service, no matter how big or small the job in hand is.

**So, if you see the Groundscapes team in action, you can rest assured that they are working on our behalf and will do their very best to meet not only our expectations, but yours too.**



## LOCAL HERO AWARDS 2024

**Freebridge Community Housing are once again very proud to be supporting the Local Hero Awards.**

This year's event, once again delivered by Your Local Paper, will take place on April 24th, 2024 at King's Lynn Corn Exchange – and we'll again be sponsoring the Neighbour of the Year category, which 'recognises incredible neighbours who know what community means'.

As West Norfolk's largest housing provider, we work with customers and communities every day.

That means we regularly see incredible examples of people offering support to each other within their respective neighbourhoods.

So, we feel perfectly placed to be able to support this category for another year.

**And you never know, maybe one of you reading this article will be nominated for the award!**



# RENT INCREASE FOR 2024/25: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Your annual rent letter should now be with you, confirming your new rent for the year ahead from April 1st.**

Like all housing associations locally and nationally we set our rent charges in line with regulations set by the governments rent standard, and with the national inflation level.

Freebridge continues to charge some of the lowest rents in West

Norfolk, across both the private rented and social housing sectors.

We understand you may have questions about your rent, such as how it is set and what changes may mean to any benefits you may be entitled to, or where you can find support.

We've listed some questions and answers overleaf for you to help with any queries you may have, while we also have a dedicated

page on our website [freebridge.org.uk](https://www.freebridge.org.uk) for you.

We're keen to keep the conversation going with you on rent and would like to show you exactly where each pound spent in rent typically goes, which will also be available to view on our website.

If you are worried about paying your rent or bills, please do turn to page 07 for more information on how we may be able to help you.

**If you claim Universal Credit, make sure you turn to page 06 for details on what you need to do to continue receiving the correct amount to cover your housing costs!**

You have four rent free weeks in 2024 - they are the weeks starting 1st + 8th April & 16th + 23rd December

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### How is my rent worked out?

Registered providers of social housing including Freebridge must charge rents in accordance with the Rent Standard, as set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Social rent levels are set by a reference to a formula-based method to ensure that similar rents are paid for similar properties. The current method is created on the basis that social rents take account of:

- which county the property is in
- local earnings
- the number of bedrooms in a property

Every year the Regulator of Social Housing and The Government publish advice on how to update the formula to the new annual Consumer Price Index and calculate rent increases using

the correct annual percentage to change their rent.

### What if I claim Universal Credit?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will get a 'to do' prompt on your online Universal Credit account to update your new housing costs. On 1st April you must complete this 'to do' by updating your new rent and service charges if applicable.

If you fail to do so, then your Universal Credit claim will be calculated incorrectly and as a result you may not be paid what you are entitled to. If you report the change late, your payments will not be backdated.

### What if I claim Housing Benefit?

If you claim Housing Benefit, we will contact your local council to tell them your new rent.

Following this letter, you will get another letter from the council telling you how much benefit you will get, and it will tell you how much of the rent you must pay yourself.

### I pay a service charge, how is this calculated?

Service charges are calculated by reviewing the actual costs incurred for services during late 2022/23 and early 2023/24. We then apply any over or under charges from previous years in order to calculate the weekly figure that you will pay from April 2024. If one of your charges is zero in 2024/25 it is likely to be because our estimate last year was too high.

Have more questions? Visit our website [freebridge.org.uk](https://www.freebridge.org.uk) for more information.



## IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT YOUR UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIM!

**On Monday 1st April 2024 you must tell  
Universal Credit about the changes to your  
rent and service charges**

**Don't forget! You need to update your Universal Credit account online with your new rent and service charges. On Monday 1st April you MUST update your Universal Credit account by reporting a 'change of circumstance' with details of the changes to your weekly rent and service charges.**

If this date has passed and you haven't reported the change, please ensure you do it now.

Your new rent and service charge details can be found on page three of your Rent Change letter that you will have recently received from us.

Please ensure that you enter the charges exactly as they are detailed on your Rent Change letter. You will need to select 'weekly' as the payment frequency.

If you don't update your claim, then your Universal Credit will be calculated incorrectly. As a result, you may not be paid what you are entitled to. If you report the change late, your payments will not be backdated.

Your monthly housing costs element is calculated by the DWP taking into account our four "rent free weeks". This means you will get the same housing costs every month even though you are not charged rent by us for weeks commencing 1st and 8th April 2024. You will still need to pay your full month housing costs to your rent account in April.

**If you need any support please call us on 03332 404 444 (option 3) during our opening hours to speak with our Income Team.**

*Have you recently migrated onto Universal Credit as part of the DWP Managed Migration Process?*

If your answer is yes, you may receive the Transitional Element within your Universal Credit claim.

The Transitional Element will reduce when you have any changes to your Universal Credit claim that result in an increase to your Universal Credit. Over time, the Transitional Element will erode or could be cancelled out altogether.

The rent increase from April, and the annual increase in benefit rates, will create an increase in your Universal Credit entitlement. This means that your Transitional Element will reduce by the same amount that your Universal Credit award increases by.

## Contact us:

Freebridge Community Housing  
 Juniper House  
 Austin Street  
 King's Lynn  
 Norfolk PE30 1DZ

Main Telephone: **03332 404 444**

Email the Income Team:  
**income@freebridge.org.uk**

Office Opening Hours:  
 8:45am - 5:15pm (Mon-Thurs),  
 8:45am - 4:45pm (Fri)

Closed on Bank Holidays,  
 Saturday and Sunday

Out of Office Hours:  
 The main telephone number  
 (03332 404 444) will divert to our  
 24-hour emergency service



For more rent support and how we can help, scan the QR code to head to our website

*Make sure you take a look at page 15, where we explain what a 53 week year means for our customers*

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

**With our rent increase for 2024/25 and with the rise of prices elsewhere too, we want to provide our customers with as much support as possible when it comes to paying your rent.**

Some of our customers may need additional help from time to time and we can do this with a range of things from:

- Access to our Support Fund which was set up to help those that need it
- One-to-one reviews with a member of our Tenancy Support Team to identify what support we can offer

- We'll provide information and advice that you need about paying your rent and financial help available to you
- We'll help you with money management and budgeting
- We'll assess whether you could be eligible for any benefits or Universal Credit

**So if you feel you need further advice or support contact us on 03332 404 444, and press option 3 or email [income@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:income@freebridge.org.uk) to talk more about how we can help.**



# DID YOU KNOW... LANDLINES ARE GOING DIGITAL

**We understand that for many of you, the landline telephone in your home is very important.**

That's why we believe that it's important to make you all aware of a change that is happening in the not-too-distant future.

Don't worry, your landline is here to stay. However, the technology that is used to make and receive calls is changing from analogue to digital as part of a major change to traditional norms.

In simpler terms, this means that by December 2025, it is expected that most calls from your home phone will be made over a broadband line.

We realise that, in some parts of West Norfolk, broadband services still aren't up to the national standard.

With that in mind, we want to help raise awareness of this

upcoming change to ensure that you are given the support you need to make this switch as easy as possible for you.

**If you are feeling daunted by this switch, please don't be.**

BT, who manage much of the nation's digital network, is rolling out its new home phone service – called digital voice – on a region-by-region basis.

For most customers, it's as simple as plugging your existing home phone into the back of your broadband router, rather than the socket on the wall.

The new digital service will, it is said, provide clearer call quality and, very helpfully, prevent most scam calls. BT will also be contacting some broadband customers, inviting them to switch their landlines to digital voice in advance of local and regional campaigning in their area.

Those people will be contacted four weeks before making the switch, and those who have disclosed any additional needs, have a healthcare pendant, no mobile signal, or only use landlines won't be switched over during the initial stages of the rollout.

It's also good to know that, if you are without access to broadband or decent mobile coverage, you will continue to use BT's service the same way you do today.

BT will ensure you have the connectivity you need and will contact you when they can move you to an alternative service.

**So, if customers have any issues, questions or concerns they can visit [bt.com/help/landline](https://bt.com/help/landline) for more information**



# CHANGES TO YOUR RECYCLING

**Did you know about the recent changes regarding recycling Do It Yourself (DIY) waste?**

**The Government has announced plans to limit the charges for householders disposing of DIY waste at recycling centres across the area, which will be good news for many of you.**

This means that you will be able to dispose of some DIY waste for free, with this applying to small-scale projects carried out by householders on their own home.

## **You can now:**

- Take a small amount of DIY waste to your local recycling centre free of charge, up to a maximum of two 50 litre sacks or one item per visit. Please note: no single item should be more than 200cm x 75cm x 70cm in size.
- Make four single visits with DIY waste per household in any four-week period.
- For DIY waste over the free amount, please use the 'pay as you throw service'.

Recycling centres will continue to accept other types of waste

from households for free, such as furniture, white goods, electrical items and garden waste.

There is no limit on the number of visits you can make to dispose of these types of waste.

## **Did you know that you can now recycle small electrical items?**

It's been going on for a while now, but the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk will now collect small electrical items collections as part of your rubbish and recycling collection.

The BCKLWN refuse collectors will place a hanger on your bin the week before collections start in your area to notify you that collections are starting – so keep your eyes peeled!

So, once you receive this hanger you will be able to put out your small electrical items out on your normal collection day the following week.

They will need to be placed inside a loosely tied-up standard size supermarket carrier bag and will be collected

weekly with either your grey or green bin.

## **What about larger items?**

If you want to recycle electrical items that are larger than a two-slice toaster, you should visit your local recycling centre.

**You can also book a bulky waste collection by calling 0330 1099 220 or emailing [norfolkwaste@serco.com](mailto:norfolkwaste@serco.com).**

This is a collection service to domestic properties for those items that are too big to put in your bin. For £37.70, BCKLWN will collect and dispose of one, two, or three large items from your home. They'll also remove additional bulky waste for £12.90 per item.

Please note that fixtures and fittings, such as bathroom suites and boilers, general builders waste, bags of rubble and also doors are now amongst the items that won't be collected.



# CUSTOMER VOICE UPDATE

**As this edition of Streets Ahead lands on at your doorstep, it serves as a timely reminder that this year we have been gifted an additional day, courtesy of the leap year.**



**The question is: how will you choose to spend this extra day of quality time? Whether with family, recharging alone, or engaging in hobbies, the myFreebridge team is geared up to make the most of it, channelling the gift of time towards leaping forward with our plans.**

We are busy compiling feedback from various sources — be it Facebook, direct messages, TSM surveys, Hello Lamp Post project, HCM surveys, focus groups, consultations, polls, or insights from Service Champions and Customer Ambassadors. The past year has been fantastic in terms of feedback collection, and a heartfelt thanks are extended to all who have taken the time to share their thoughts, feelings, and suggestions for improvement.

In March, your Service Champions and Customer Ambassadors are set to meet for the first time since myFreebridge formed for a one-day workshop. The primary objective is to work through the wealth of feedback, which will then pave the way for work plans for the year ahead.

Focussing on areas requiring enhancement, the groups will evaluate this year's activities and set the stage for further improvements. In addition, some selected topics will then be elevated to a regional level for discussion with the newly formed Regional Voice, an initiative run by Independent East – a group of five local Housing Associations (Freebridge, Saffron, Broadland, Orwell and Havebury).

Great strides have been made over the past year. For instance:

Despite a 66% satisfaction rate in the last TSM survey regarding repair completion time, Freebridge introduced a new scheduling system to elevate the customer experience.

Similarly, insights from myFreebridge, Service Champions, Customer Ambassadors, and Community Voices have informed initiatives to enhance communication, aiming to boost the 66% satisfaction rate related to keeping customers informed about the things that matter to them.

Addressing concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB), workshops and surveys facilitated the creation of an ASB roadshow and a communications contract, aiming to tailor updates on ASB cases to customer needs.

With a view to improving satisfaction in complaint resolution (currently at 29%), substantial efforts have been made, including customer-focused workshops and internal training to relieve dissatisfaction and manage complaints more effectively.

Likewise, the collaboration between Service Champions, Customer Ambassadors, and Freebridge teams has enabled improvements in Support Fund information, surveyor letters, and supporting

information with rent increase letters. Throughout the year, they remain vigilant, holding Freebridge accountable and monitoring performance against promises made in our Tenant Customer Charter.

As the leap year unfolds, the myFreebridge team is poised

for significant progress, fuelled by invaluable customer feedback and the commitment to our continuous improvement. The extra day serves not just as a gift of time, but as an opportunity to leap ahead in service and customer satisfaction.



**Bex**  
Freebridge's  
Customer  
Voice Lead

## REMINDER ABOUT YOUR COMMUNAL AREAS

**For those of you who have them, we wanted to talk about your communal area.**

We know that these areas are used on a daily basis and we're always delighted to see the space being used to boost community spirit in your respective towns and villages.

However, it is vital that you all do your bit to help keep these areas in a good condition.

When it comes to the disposal of domestic rubbish, please don't leave that in the communal area.

Indeed, not disposing of this correctly can cause health and safety risks to both you and your neighbours. Instead, place this waste in your own refuse and recycling bins as you normally would.

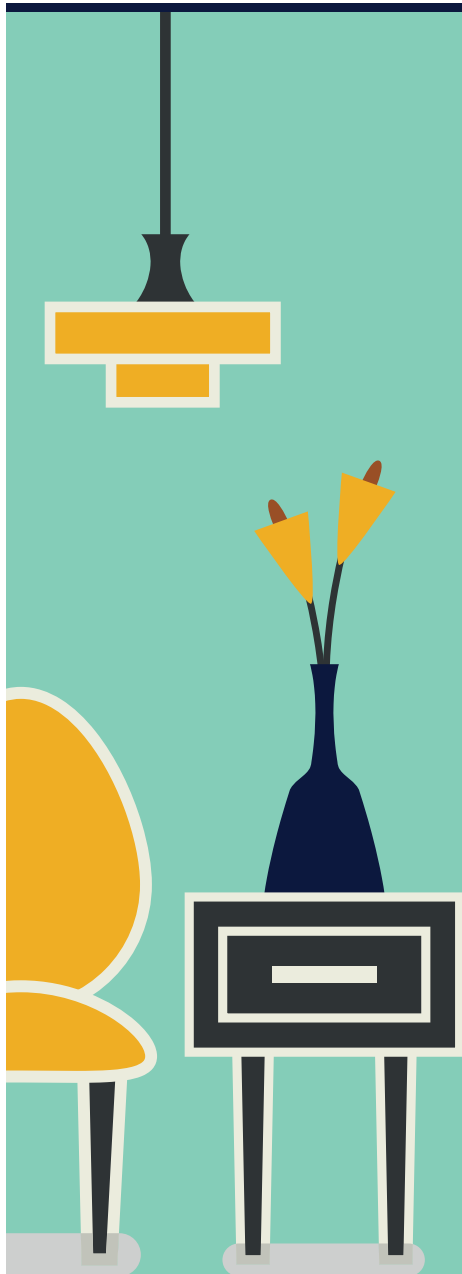
When it comes to getting rid of your bulky items, please

do not leave them in internal communal areas while they are waiting to be collected. For more information on bulky waste collection, see page 09.

Likewise, any furniture, electrical and other household items shouldn't be left in communal areas. These can create a fire hazard or risk to other residents, most notably small children.

You shouldn't put up any decorations, such as Christmas lights, or leave other personal belongings, your shoes for example, in any communal space either.

**If you'd like a copy of the communal area leaflet, you can email [tenancyenquiries@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:tenancyenquiries@freebridge.org.uk) and we can send one out to you, either via post or email.**





# OUT AND ABOUT IN WEST NORFOLK

**Our Out and About programme is something we are really proud of at Freebridge.**

This initiative sees our colleagues visit you, our customers, directly in your homes so that we can engage with you and better understand what you want from us.

We want to be able to provide you with a level of customer service that you'd expect - and this process always offers us great insight into where we are excelling and where we are falling short.

In 2023, we visited Hunstanton, Outwell, Terrington, Fairstead (twice) and Brancaster, as well as undertaking a Silent Voices outing to reconnect with some customers that hadn't been in contact with us for a little while.

Overall, that meant that Freebridge colleagues

visited a total of 1,836 homes throughout the year.

These Out and Abouts enabled us to raise 243 new repairs, while we were also able to facilitate 48 different homes with visits from our dedicated Tenancy Team, who also had 68 other homes referred to them.

Visiting your neighbourhoods also allowed us to log 91 new cases of something not being quite right, while we also arranged for 100 follow-up calls to be made.

Importantly, we were also able to update the contact details of 155 customers, while 101 changes of occupancy were also noted.

We also recognised that the start of the year is an important time to check in on you, so added two more dates at the start of 2024, too.

Indeed, we visited 159 homes at the start of January on a

winter outing that saw us look to connect with customers who are aged 85 and over.

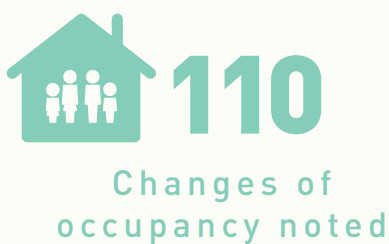
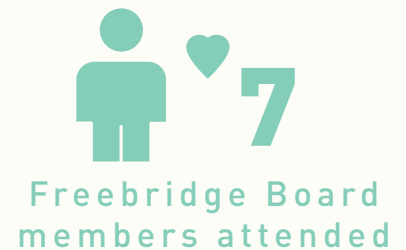
In terms of how many of you answered, the figure of 67 per cent made this our most successful outing of the year!

And, by the time this edition of Streets Ahead hits your doormat, we will also have completed another similar outing at the end of February.

**If we've been to your area in the past few months and missed you, please do give us a call on 0332 404 444 and let us know anything you'd have liked to say in person.**

# 2023 OUT & ABOUT STATS

+ PART ONE OF WINTER DATES



This programme is all about encouraging you to engage with us and allowing us to provide you with excellent customer service.

So, if you want to talk to us, please do look out for more information to see where we've visiting during 2024!

**Of course, we will provide updates in Streets Ahead, but we'll also update you via our social media platforms on Facebook and X, while we also have updates on our engagement platform myFreebridge.**

# DO YOU KNOW THE SIGNS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE?

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over (1.4 million women and 751,00 men) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending 2023.

Given the size of the numbers mentioned above, we understand that at least one of you will be reading this and will either be a victim of domestic abuse, or perhaps know somebody who is.

With that in mind, we want you to know that Freebridge is very much here to help you and we'd like to talk to you if you feel you'd benefit from reaching out.

We know that it is difficult, but if you or somebody that you know are being abused, please know that you can come to us with confidence.

At Freebridge, we are working towards getting our Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and are very proud of the response that we have

received from our employees.

So far, more than 40 of our staff have put themselves forward to either be part of a safeguarding steering group and/or to become experts on domestic abuse.

We understand that this is a very sensitive and personal area, but you can feel safe in the knowledge that letting us know about any concerns or worries that you may have will remain confidential and will be acted upon.

Abuse can come in many forms, so if any of the areas listed below resonate with you, we're here for you:

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect
- Discrimination
- Institutional abuse
- Self-neglect
- Modern slavery

## CONTACT US



You can call us in confidence on **03332 404 444**

or



email [safeguarding@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@freebridge.org.uk)

*Please remember that you are not alone*

You can also get in touch with the Pandora Project, a local domestic abuse charity with a dedicated and specialist team offering advice, support and information to women and children affected by domestic abuse. Find out more: [pandoraproject.org.uk](http://pandoraproject.org.uk)

# WE HAVE A 53-WEEK YEAR AHEAD OF US!

**The financial year 2024/25 is one of the rare years in the Gregorian calendar that has 53 weeks instead of 52.**

**What that means for all Freebridge customers is that the coming year (from April, 2024) will have 49 rent charging weeks instead of the usual 48, with four rent-free weeks as usual.**

We appreciate you may have questions, but hopefully we can cover them below:

## What if I pay monthly?

You can calculate how much you should be paying by multiplying your weekly rent by 49 and then dividing that by 12. So, for example, if your rent is £95 per week it's:  $£95 \times 49 \div 12 = £387.92$ .

Simply do that sum and contact your bank to update your standing order from April. If you pay by Direct Debit, we'll do this for you automatically.

## What if I claim Housing Benefit?

Don't worry! If you receive Housing Benefit you don't need to do anything, as the 49 rent-charging weeks will be paid.

## What if I claim Universal Credit?

If you receive Universal Credit, you should be aware that this is currently calculated on a 52-week basis. Your rent is charged weekly, but Universal Credit is assessed and paid monthly.

Because of this, Universal Credit only pays 364 days in a year, even though there are always 365 days in a year (and 366 every leap year).

## Why is this?

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) works out your monthly rent by multiplying a week's rent by 52, taking off your 4 rent-free weeks, and dividing by 12. This would be fine if there were exactly 52 weeks of rent in a year but there aren't. There's always an extra day in the year- or 2 in a leap year.

You won't normally notice this but every few years when the extra day falls on a Monday, it will show on your rent account as a full week's debt, as this is the day your rent week starts. 2024/2025 is one of these years.

The DWP has said they won't pay any extra Universal Credit to cover this. If you are clearing your rent account balance to zero each week or month, this won't be a problem.

But if you pay your rent every month by using the same system as the DWP, then you'll be a day short every year (two in a leap year) and will have to make up that extra. The only way to avoid falling into arrears is by paying a little extra each week to ensure your rent is covered.

**Want support with budgeting or other money advice? Email our Tenancy Support team at [TenancySupport@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:TenancySupport@freebridge.org.uk) and they'll be happy to help.**



# NEW HOMES IN KING'S LYNN

**We wanted to share with you all that the first 15 homes have been completed on our exciting new Salters Road development.**

This scheme has come about through a partnership between ourselves at Freebridge Community Housing, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk and its development partner Lovell – and will see 78 homes built near Lynnsport in King's Lynn.

The scheme is all affordable, so all of the homes will be either available at an affordable rent, or available to buy through shared ownership.

The first 15 of the high-quality one, two and three-bedroomed homes have been completed in just under a year at the site, which is just off Columbia Way.

Some 54 of the homes will have photo-voltaic solar panels, and 28 will have charging points for electric vehicles.

Paul Newbold, our Director of New Homes and Commercial at Freebridge, said: "We're delighted that this much-needed project has now reached the stage that we are able to advertise the first homes at Salters Road.

"We appreciate the urgent need for affordable housing in a central location in King's Lynn and, in partnership with the Borough Council and Lovell, we are very pleased to have been able to help deliver this excellent development.

"We're looking forward to meeting our first tenants moving into these properties and are happy that the next wave of properties will be advertised in early 2024."

**The next homes are expected to be ready for occupation in March and the development should be fully completed by October.**





## OTHER NEW HOMES ON THE HORIZON

**We're committed to creating homes, communities, and local spaces to be proud of at Freebridge.**

That includes our new all-affordable development at Salters's Road (see page 16) in King's Lynn, but we're also out building better futures in other locations in West Norfolk.

Indeed, we recently gained planning permission to build 29 properties on Lynn Road in Stoke Ferry.

This development will consist of 11 two-bedroom houses, 12 three-beds, two four-bedroom houses and four one-beds, with six of the properties within the scheme available for shared ownership. The remainder of the properties will be affordable rented homes, too.

We are also building a new car park for the community

Village Hall and are providing a financial contribution to a new snake slide for the existing play area!

Likewise, we're delighted to also have planning permission to build five new affordable rented properties on Chapnall Road in Walsoken.

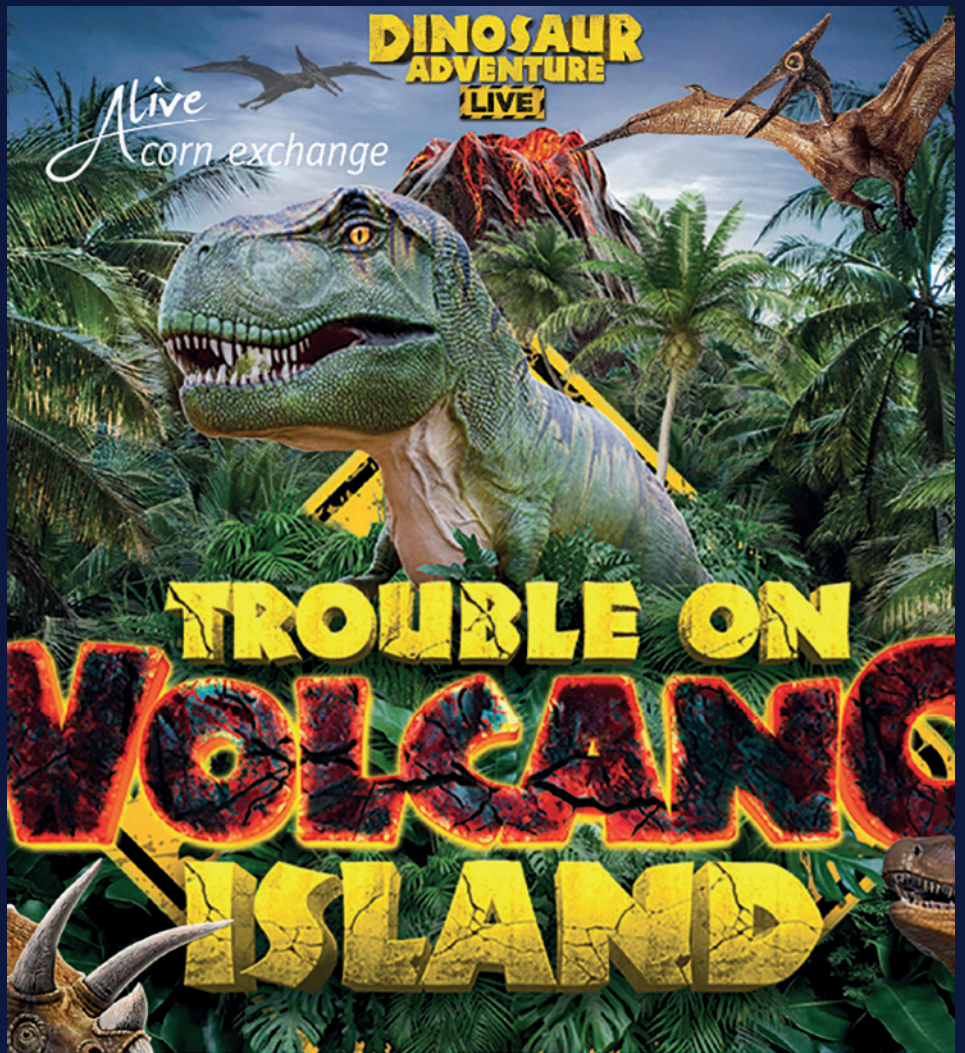
This includes three two-bedroom and two three-bedroom homes, which will complement the 14 other rented homes we already have on the site.

If all goes to plan, we're hopeful customers will be living in those new homes by Christmas 2024.

**We also have shared ownership properties available in the sought-after locations of Docking and Welney – so why not email [development@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:development@freebridge.org.uk) and let us know if you would like more information.**



# WHAT'S ON... IN WEST NORFOLK



King's Lynn Corn Exchange

4 April - 2pm & 4pm

Box Office: 01553 764864  
kingslynncornexchange.co.uk



Saturday 20th March 2024 –  
Mini First Aid

Would you like to feel more confident in the actions you would take if faced with a medical emergency?

Head over to myFreebridge for a link to book.

For more things going on in the local area, make sure you check out myFreebridge and the What's On Spring page!



## Vancouver Quarter Events Coming Up

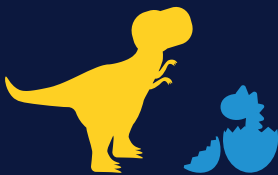
Saturday 30th March 2024 – Easter family fun

This Easter, Vancouver Quarter are bringing you a FREE Easter family fun day, packed with lots of activities for children of all ages, live music, scavenger hunt, FREE facepainting, street entertainment and of course, plenty of CHOCOLATE! They look forward to seeing you there between 10am and 3pm!



Thursday 4th April 2024 – Optimus Prime comes to the Vancouver Quarter

\*Details coming soon! We'll share more information when it becomes available!



Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th April – Jurassic Adventure Weekend

Head into King's Lynn for a weekend of FREE Jurassic adventure! You'll find Betsy the Triceratops, Loki the Velociraptor as well as baby dinosaurs roaming the Vancouver Quarter! Enjoy dinosaur theme craft workshops, photo opportunities and a fun fact-finding trail around the Vancouver Quarter between 10am and 3pm!



Scan here to fill in the survey on myFreebridge



## AWAAB'S LAW CONSULTATION

**Back in 2020, a two-year-old child called Awaab Ishak died due to exposure to damp and mould in his Rochdale Boroughwide Housing.**

Awaab's death touched all of us and has led to a lot of reflection in the social housing sector.

His parents raised concerns about their living conditions time and again, but the landlord not only repeatedly failed to act, but blamed the Ishak family for causing the hazardous mould.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is on record as saying that everyone deserves to live in a home that is decent safe and secure.

With that in mind, Awaab's Law was introduced in the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and requires landlords to investigate and fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes.

This has led to an official consultation on timescales for

repairs in the social rented sector (in England only).

The primary purpose of this consultation is to set those timeframes, with the DLUHC hoping to hear views from across the sector.

The new rules will form part of a tenancy agreement, so that tenants can hold landlords to account by law if they fail to provide a decent home.

On our customer engagement platform myFreebridge, we have provided more information on this and have also signposted the link for you to take part in this consultation.

Your views are incredibly important, and we'd encourage you to take part.

**If there is anything you are unsure about, or you are having trouble understanding about this consultation, please email [customervoice@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:customervoice@freebridge.org.uk) and we'll be happy to help.**

myfreebridge



**Become a trusted armchair advisor and join our growing number of Community Voices!**



Scan here to visit the myFreebridge platform or head to

[freebridgecommunityhousing.uk](https://freebridgecommunityhousing.uk).  
[engagementhq.com](https://engagementhq.com)



## ★ Our myFreebridge competition winners!

We've now drawn the winners of our latest competition - if you'd like a chance, keep a look out on the myFreebridge page! ★

Winner of Family Cinema tickets: **Izabela from Kings Lynn** who said "I am really looking forward to taking the grandchildren out to the cinema – thank you so much!"

Winner of: £100 Shopping vouchers: **John from Fakenham** who said "Thank you for the vouchers. I really like myFreebridge as its nice to know what Freebridge is doing."

★ Winner of £150 Shopping Vouchers: **Amiee from Downham Market** who said "Many thanks once again, it's still not sunk in and congratulations to the other winners!"

# OPT IN TO RECEIVE A DIGITAL COPY OF STREETS AHEAD



**Streets Ahead is sent to you every few months as you are a customer of Freebridge Community Housing.**

We send the magazine to all of our customers to tell you about the services we provide and the work we're doing as a registered provider of social housing.

If you no longer want to receive a paper copy of Streets Ahead delivered

to you, and want to receive a digital copy instead, just let us know, and we will arrange for you to be removed from our current mailing list.

To opt-out of receiving a paper copy, you can fill in our digital form by scanning the QR code below, or you can email your name and address to [communications@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:communications@freebridge.org.uk)

## A STAKE IN FREEBRIDGE: HOW TO BECOME A SHAREHOLDER

Freebridge Community Housing is inviting its tenants to become shareholders. As a shareholder, you have the right to attend the Annual General Meeting and vote on major issues in the running of the organisation.

Shareholding is designed to increase tenants' stakeholding in their housing provider and is a way to become involved in what Freebridge does.

If you need more information about how to become a Freebridge shareholder or just want to know more contact the Governance Team on 03332 404 444 or email [shareholderenquiries@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:shareholderenquiries@freebridge.org.uk)



*scan me to opt in to receive a digital version of streets ahead!*

# COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS AT FREEBRIDGE

We want you to know that it's vitally important to us that we offer you the best possible customer service.

## Housing Ombudsman Service

We can help if you have a problem complaining to your landlord.

**Contact us:**

**by telephone on:**  
0300 111 3000

**by email:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**via our website:** [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

**or by post at:** Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ



**We know, however, know that there will always be occasions when you're unhappy with a situation at either your home or within your community – and that you'll want us to be aware of it.**

It's absolutely your right to contact us and let us know how we can improve our service to you.

Indeed, we actively encourage you to get in touch with us if you have an issue and are always very happy to hear from you.

Along the same lines, we also want to hear from you if you'd like to compliment our service or if members of the Freebridge team have gone out of their way to help you.

We are always analysing our performance and your feedback is a key part of that. So, your complaints, comments and compliments are important as they allow us to shape the service we offer.

At Freebridge, we are committed to providing excellent customer service, which means we must always look at ourselves and how you feel we are performing.

Feedback, be it positive or negative, really helps us and is always passed to leaders and managers within the team, helping us evolve and improve the way we operate.

July 2023

**06**

compliments received

**27**

complaints received

Reasons for complaints

23	property condition
01	estate management
08	other

August 2023

**04**

compliments received

**18**

complaints received

Reasons for complaints

14	property condition
04	estate management
05	other

September 2023

**07**

compliments received

**37**

complaints received

Reasons for complaints

26	property condition
05	estate management
17	other

# OUR PERFORMANCE

FOR QUARTER TWO (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023)

**83** Complaints received

That's up by sixteen compared to numbers in quarter one.



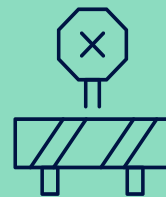
**10,001** Repairs completed

That's 64% more than the previous three months.



**123** Gained no access

We gained no access on 123 responsive repairs appointments.



**7** New homes

We began construction on site for 7 properties this quarter.



**34 Days** Time taken to complete routine repairs

Our target is 28 days.



Some complaints are added to more than one category, so they may not add up to the total number of complaints for that month!

# HOW TO CONTACT US

## **VISIT or WRITE TO US at:**

Juniper House, Austin Street,  
King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1DZ

We're open between:

8.45am - 5.15pm (Monday-Thursday)

8.45am - 4.45pm (Friday)

and closed on Saturdays, Sundays and  
Bank Holidays.

**TELEPHONE:** 03332 404 444

We've been made aware that some mobile  
phone providers now charge for calling numbers  
beginning with 0333, if your provider is one of  
these you can also contact us on 0800 1691694 -  
which is free from all numbers.

Out of office hours our main number diverts to  
our 24 hour emergency service.

**WEBSITE:** [freebridge.org.uk](http://freebridge.org.uk)

**FACEBOOK:** [facebook.com/freebridge](https://facebook.com/freebridge)

**X:** @freebridge



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## **TREATING EVERYONE FAIRLY**

Freebridge treat everyone fairly. We promote equality of opportunity and value the differences between our customers and everyone who works for Freebridge Community Housing. All our employees, contractors and consultants must treat colleagues and customers with politeness, tolerance, and respect, regardless of their age, colour, disability, ethnicity, sex or gender identity, marital status, nationality or national origin, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities or any other unjustifiable reasons.

**We will not tolerate unfair discriminatory behaviour of any kind and we encourage the reporting of any such behaviour. We will act upon all complaints appropriately.**

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**IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO UNDERSTAND THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE GET IN TOUCH**

**Freebridge**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING